

Evaluation Briefing Note



2013-2015 OEV Impact Evaluation series: Moderate Acute Malnutrition programming

Introduction

The WFP Office of Evaluation (OEV) will be conducting a series of impact evaluations on moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) programming in WFP. These evaluations are due to be presented to the WFP Executive Board (EB) in 2015 and were approved by the EB as part of OE's 2012-2015 work plans¹. The evaluation series is currently at the preparation stage.

Background

Building upon the Lancet series on maternal and child undernutrition of 2008² and the interagency/government Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) framework of 2009/10³ and the REACH project⁴, WFP has transitioned to a new approach to nutrition programming. This approach builds upon an evidence base of intervention effectiveness⁵, an understanding of the multi-causal nature of malnutrition and a focus on the first 1000 days of life as critical to child survival. This new approach has developed iteratively over the past 4-5 years and was officially communicated in the 2012 WFP nutrition policy. Based on a series of memoranda of understanding (MOU) with UNICEF, WFP is responsible for the treatment and prevention of MAM, while UNICEF is responsible for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Both moderate and severe acute malnutrition are critical issues for maternal and child health; however this evaluation will focus on WFP's results in meeting its mandated

responsibilities for treatment and prevention of MAM.

WFP's approach to addressing MAM includes food assistance for both treatment and prevention and selected complementary activities to address the causes of malnutrition. These include food fortification, ensuring complementarity of interventions (both WFP and other actors, government) and technical assistance and advocacy with host governments and other agencies. WFP's interventions are intended to support primary and reproductive health care interventions to the maximum extent possible, recognizing that these are not always functioning in emergency situations but are essential parts of the continuum of care⁶. The 2012 nutrition policy states that WFP will support country-led assessments, development of M&E systems, integrate WFP's nutrition work into national strategies and conduct operational research on the effectiveness of programme interventions. This builds upon good practice in nutrition programming and upon recognized WFP work in the field.

Within this on-going work there is an opportunity for the impact evaluation series to focus on what can be broadly termed '*programme effectiveness*', evaluating the *contribution* of WFP MAM interventions within the wider programming context in a given operational setting. In addition to the direct contribution to improved nutrition outcomes, this includes WFP's support and contribution to

complementary health service interventions, the support and contribution to technical capacity of partners and health and nutrition providers, and the contribution to an improved policy and fiscal environment supporting these services.

¹ The original title of this impact evaluation series was MCHN (mother/child health & nutrition); however, the current focus on MAM better reflects WFP's operational approach and mandate.

² Horton, R. (2008). "Maternal and child undernutrition: an urgent opportunity." *Lancet* **371**(9608): 179.

³ <http://scalingupnutrition.org/>

⁴ <http://www.reachpartnership.org/>

⁵ Bhutta, Z. A., T. Ahmed, R. E. Black, S. Cousens, K. Dewey, E. Giugliani, B. A. Haider, B. Kirkwood, S. S. Morris, H. P. Sachdev, M. Shekar, Maternal and G. Child Undernutrition Study (2008). "What works? Interventions for maternal and child undernutrition and survival." *Lancet* **371**(9610): 417-440.

⁶ Kerber, K. J., J. E. de Graft-Johnson, Z. A. Bhutta, P. Okong, A. Starrs and J. E. Lawn (2007). "Continuum of care for maternal, newborn, and child health: from slogan to service delivery." *Ibid.* **370**(9595): 1358-1369.

Proposed evaluation design

The approach to this impact evaluation series is proposed as theory-based, focused upon the contribution of WFP nutrition activities within selected operational contexts. This utilizes the broad definition of impact (the OECD DAC definition⁷, which focuses not solely on attribution to a given treatment, but upon intended and unintended outcomes, implementation factors, etc.) and would necessarily use a mix of methods, building upon existing data and decentralized evaluations, to analyse the contribution of WFP's interventions.

The evaluation will use a logic model to guide the evaluation; the logic model illustrates the theory of how WFP's MAM-related interventions are intended to have impact as one intervention among many that eventually contribute to positive nutrition impacts for children and mothers. The WFP nutrition 'logical pathways' provide the starting reference for the development of this logic model⁸.

The focus on higher level results is appropriate for complex interventions and for an evaluation of impact for which there is a 'causal package' rather than a simpler linear cause-effect relationship⁹. The evaluation questions will thus be focused on outcomes and intended / unintended impacts in the context of MAM intervention delivery in selected country settings. The evaluation questions will also focus on understanding the implementation factors and various causal factors that affect the achievement of outcomes and impacts.

WFP has a close programming focus on 20 countries with a high burden of malnutrition. Within these 20 countries, there are high-capacity countries and low-capacity countries, emergency contexts and non-emergency contexts, etc. It is proposed to use these 20 countries as the initial short-list of countries for further selection, based on themes, regional variation, etc. (to be

determined) of the countries of focus for the impact evaluation series.

Evaluability assessment

An evaluability assessment (EA) will be conducted in order to assess whether the proposed evaluation approach is feasible; elaborate evaluation design and country selection; and guide the development of the terms of reference (ToR). This will include an assessment of the available secondary data including a mapping of the nutrition activities in the 20 focus countries and relevant monitoring data, a review of similar approaches from the wider literature and the evidence gaps in nutrition programming within the 20 focus countries, and the refinement of the logic model to guide the evaluation.

Timing

Phase 1: Preparation (EA / ToR)	March 2013 – August 2013
Phase 2: Inception	January 2014 – March 2014
Phase 3: Evaluation fieldwork	March 2014 – December 2014
Phase 4: Analysis and reporting	September 2014 – June 2015
Phase 5: Follow-up	Post – EBA and EB2 2015

Evaluation management

The evaluation will be managed by the WFP Office of Evaluation and an independent evaluation team(s) will implement the evaluation, including all fieldwork, analysis and reporting.

Please contact the evaluation manager, Ross Smith, at ross.smith@wfp.org for further questions and details.

⁷ OECD-DAC (2010). Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management. <http://www.oecd.org/dac/2754804.pdf>

⁸ WFP (2012). Nutrition at the World Food Programme: Programming for Nutrition-Specific Interventions. Rome, World Food Programme.

⁹ Stern, E., N. Stame, J. Mayne, K. Forss, R. Davies and B. Befani (2012). Broadening the range of designs for impact evaluations: report of a study commissioned by DFID, UK Department for International Development (DFID).